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Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. PAUL.

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ON THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

(Concluded.)

5. *Objections answered.*

It is expected that objections will still be made to the doctrine of reconciliation, as stated in this essay; and that it will be contended, that it falls short of the atonement necessary. It might silence such objections merely to say, that as the New Testament knows of no other atonement, and the New Testament is the only standard of faith to christians, this must be all the atonement necessary, and no other ought to be admitted; but it may be useful to answer them distinctly.

Objection 1. Sin, being committed against an infinite being, is an infinite evil, and exposes the sinner to infinite wrath and punishment: consequently, an infinite satisfaction is required, without which no sinner can be saved; and none but an infinite being can make that satisfaction, by suffering the punishment due to the sinner in his stead; but the doctrine of reconciliation, as you have stated it, includes no such atonement.

Answer. The scriptures nowhere assert that sin is an infinite evil, nor is it possible it should be such, because it is the act of a finite being, and it is impossible the actions of a finite being should be infinite. The infiniteness of the Divine Lawgiver no more constitutes the transgressions of his laws an infinite evil, than it does obedience to those laws an infinite good. If sin be in its nature an infinite evil, every sin must be such, and there must be as

many infinite evils as there are sins; but if every sin be an infinite evil, requiring an infinite satisfaction, how could one such satisfaction be more than an atonement for one sin? If every sin, or, at least, some one sin, be not an infinite evil, all the sins ever committed, taken in the mass, cannot amount to an infinite evil; for those things which are finite or limited, however added together or multiplied, can never become infinite or unlimited. Sin cannot be an infinite evil, because the evil of it extendeth not to God, the only infinite Being, but is limited to creatures who are all finite. Both sin, and the evil of it, i. e. the mischief it does, are evidently bounded, therefore not infinite. To say that sin is infinite, is to exclude all degrees in criminality and guilt, which is contrary to scripture, common sense, and evident matter of fact. If sin be not an infinite evil, it cannot expose the sinner to infinite wrath and punishment; because, to be just, punishment must be proportioned to crimes, and the scriptures throughout, describe the punishment which God hath threatened as such.

Admitting, for argument sake, that sin is an infinite evil, and deserves infinite punishment, it by no means follows that God cannot pardon it without an infinite satisfaction; seeing he hath no where said that he requires such a satisfaction. Before it be asserted that without an infinite satisfaction sinners cannot be saved, it ought to be proved, even on the supposition that sin is an infinite evil, that the mercy of God is not also infinite, and that the God of infinite mercy, whose prerogative it is to do whatsoever he pleaseth, cannot, in the exercise of his mercy, forgive sin freely, however great it may be; for until this be proved such a satisfaction cannot be shown to be necessary.

The above objection is unfounded, as the positions which form it are erroneous: and, as it ascribes infinite wrath to God, who is declared to be love, and to delight in mercy, it libels his adorable character, and veils his infinite loveliness in dark shades. What! shall it be thought that the transgression of his commands by a frail child of the dust, was sufficient to raise infinite wrath in a Being who is infinitely good, to make his throne the seat of "hot devouring flame," and to determine him to pursue the hapless offender with all the fierceness of his indignation, and to overwhelm him with floods of vengeance,

to all eternity, unless a person as infinite as himself, and as compassionate as *he* is vindictive, should interpose and appease his wrath, by giving him full satisfaction for the sins of the real offender? But if all this cannot be thought, cannot even be believed as gospel, the notion of atonement for which the objector contends is as baseless as it is dishonorable to God and abhorrent to reason. The doctrine of reconciliation, as we have stated it, is perfectly consistent with the character and perfections of God, and highly honourable to the gracious Father of all; and, if the infinite mercy of God be a proper ground of hope for sinners, and the gospel be sufficient for their salvation, it lies open to no objection on the ground of insufficiency.

Objection 2. Your statement of the doctrine of reconciliation is inconsistent with the justice of God, as it makes no provision for the satisfying of its demands; but the debt which sinners owe *must* be paid.

Answer. This objection is founded upon wrong notions of the justice of God; on the assumption that it is a principle of retaliation or revenge; that it must inflict the punishment due to sin upon some one, but that it is indifferent as to the person on whom it inflicts it, whether it be the real offender or an innocent person; and that the exercise of mere mercy, and free forgiveness, by the supreme Lawgiver, is inconsistent with his justice; but the justice of God consists in his doing that which is most right and fit for him to do: and who shall dare to say, that it is not perfectly right and fit, i. e., just, for him to pardon penitent sinners freely, without demanding any satisfaction for their sins? To suppose that the exercise of free mercy and forgiveness is inconsistent with his justice, is to suppose there are divine attributes which are at variance with each other, and is clearly contradictory to the gospel, which is a revelation of divine mercy and free forgiveness. Until it can be shown that the justice of God ever demanded such a satisfaction as the objector supposes, i. e. the punishment of a righteous person in the place and stead of the guilty, the objection can have no force. The objector's notion of atonement is indeed inconsistent with the justice of God; for it supposes him to impute sin to an innocent person, and to punish him for it, that actual offenders might be secured from the penal

consequences of their crimes; and it converts the gospel into a bill of indemnity in favour of rebels, procured by the infliction of the penalties they had incurred upon one who always perfectly obeyed. What man could bring himself to think it just for him to impute crimes to an innocent person, and to punish him for them? Yet, if the reputed orthodox doctrine of atonement be true, he who did this would imitate God; though all mankind would execrate his conduct, as a gross violation of all the principles of justice. The objector, before he repeats his objection, should show how his own notions of atonement are to be reconciled with the common feelings of justice which God hath implanted in all men. As to the assertion, that “the debt which sinners owe *must* be paid,” this part of the objection is fully answered by the manner in which our Lord illustrated the doctrine of forgiveness of sins. When he compared sins to debts, and sinners to debtors, had a satisfaction for sins, answerable to the payment of debts, been necessary, no doubt he would have mentioned such payment as taking place in order to the discharge of the debtor; but he gave no intimation of any thing of the kind being necessary; on the contrary he said what is incompatible with such payment being required; that when the debtors had nothing to pay, their creditor frankly forgave them; which was evidently teaching that God forgives sins without receiving any satisfaction for them, as much as a creditor forgives a debt who cancels it without receiving any payment. In fact, if sins be viewed as debts, satisfaction and forgiveness are incompatible with each other; for a debt cannot be both paid and freely forgiven, if it be paid nothing remains to forgive. No doctrine is more plainly stated, or more pointedly insisted on, in the New Testament, than that of the free forgiveness of sins: this doctrine is perfectly consistent with the reconciliation of the world to God by Jesus Christ; but it can never be shown to be consistent with the popular notion of atonement. This, if there were no other reason, as that doctrine is not found in the scriptures, would justify us in rejecting it: and, as God freely forgives us, we have no need to trouble ourselves about how his justice is to be satisfied for our sins

Objection 3. If you deny the atonement, as meaning a satisfaction for sins, you must depend on your own works

and merits for salvation; and so give up the doctrine of salvation by the free grace of God.

Answer. Though we have often been charged with substituting our own works and merits in the place of the atonement of Christ, as a satisfaction for sins, no charge can be more false. The doctrine of human merit, under this view of it, we utterly disclaim; we know that we have never merited, nor can merit, either salvation, or eternal life, or indeed any blessing, at the hand of God. We owe him all the obedience we are capable of performing, and, after we have done all, have reason to say, “we are unprofitable servants; we have done no more than was our duty to do.” God can never be our debtor, we can lay him under no obligation, we can claim nothing of him on the ground of merit. Alas! we have sinned against him, we have done evil in his sight, and have no hope but in his mercy. But why should it be concluded, that because we give up the notion of satisfaction for sins, we must expect salvation and eternal life on the ground of our own merits? Is there no ground of hope for sinners, but either their own merits, or the merits of some other person? Is merit, after all, the foundation on which we are to expect salvation and eternal life? No; we disclaim the doctrine of merit, under every view, as the ground on which we hope for such invaluable blessings. Instead of substituting any thing of our own devising, in the place of the anti-evangelical notion of satisfaction for sins, we gratefully and joyfully receive what God hath set before us in his word, his free grace, and abounding mercy, in his Son Jesus the Christ. This is the foundation on which we hope for salvation and eternal life, the free grace and mercy of God.

Whatever the advocates of the reputed orthodox doctrine of atonement may say about the free grace of God, on their system, properly speaking, there is no free grace of God; salvation was bought and paid for; all the blessings of the gospel were purchased; God was bought off from the infliction of his vengeance; what the gospel exhibits is not *his* free pardon, but a purchased indemnity for sinners; he had value received for all his blessings before he bestowed them. If they will still use the phrase, “Grace of God,” to be consistent with what they call the leading doctrines of the gospel, they should rather say, “bought grace;” for they contend that a price was paid

for it; and the blessings bestowed by him who received a price for them, can never with truth be called *his* free gifts, however freely they may come to the sinner; whose obligations must be to the generous friend who purchased them, and gives them freely. The doctrine of reconciliation, as set forth in this essay, so far from being inconsistent with the free grace of God, gloriously displays his unmerited, unpurchased favour to a sinful world; and, surely, if any thing deserves the name of free grace, it must be unmerited, unpurchased favour. According to the view we have taken of the subject, all the blessings of the gospel, including salvation and eternal life, originated in, and flow from the great love of God to sinful men, are his free gifts, come in a way of free favour and rich mercy, through Jesus Christ. A powerful argument, with us, against the popular notion of atonement, is, that it is subversive of the free grace of God, and, in fact, builds salvation on the ground of human merit; for as the death of Jesus was the death of a man, (and who will say now that as God he died?) if the merit of his death be the ground of our salvation, it must have human merit for its foundation.

Objection 4. Your statement of the doctrine of reconciliation, diminishes the value of the Saviour, and of his death.

Answer. If the not depreciating the infinite loveliness of God, his Father, in order to magnify the superior benignity and condescension of the Saviour; if the not transforming that being who is the fountain of all mercy, into wrath and vindictiveness, that his more mild and merciful Son may have the honour of appeasing his wrath, and rendering him placid and forgiving; if the not representing our heavenly Father as an unfeeling and inexorable creditor, who would not abate one farthing of what his insolvent debtors owed him; as a mercenary being who would bestow no blessings till he had his price for them, that Jesus may have the praise of having satisfied all his demands, and of having purchased the blessings of salvation of him; be to diminish the value of the Saviour, and of his death, we must plead guilty to this charge; but then it is a charge which can never be supported against us on scriptural ground, and to avoid it we dare not take the fearful alternative of degrading the character of God, of

asserting what is contrary to the plainest dictates of both reason and scripture, and would be subversive of the gospel, as a system of the free grace of God. The doctrine of reconciliation, as we have stated it, stamps great importance on the work of Christ, and shows his labours and sufferings to be of the deepest interest to all mankind; and our statement appears to be justified by the express declarations of Jesus and his apostles—with this we are satisfied. According to the view we have taken of the subject, God hath done, and will do, by Jesus Christ, every thing necessary for the salvation of the world; the gospel is a system of truth and grace in which all are interested, and by which all may be savingly and eternally benefited; and we cannot perceive what more is necessary.

6. *The popular notion of atonement is attended with insuperable difficulties.*

Not to repeat what has been already stated, that an atonement which consist in satisfaction made to divine justice for the sins of men, and a price paid to God for their salvation, never can be reconciled with the doctrine of salvation by the free grace and rich mercy of God, and with the idea of God's forgiving sins freely; there are other difficulties which attend the popular notion, which it will be proper to mention, in order to show how contrary it is to the simplicity of the gospel.

It is contended that an infinite person was necessary to make the atonement required; consequently it ought to be shown that Jesus Christ was infinite; that he may appear qualified to make it: but the scriptures no where assert that he was an infinite person, on the contrary they declare concerning him what is incompatible with infinity; that he *increased in wisdom and stature*, and in favour with God and man. (Luke ii. 52.) But is it possible for an infinite person to increase under any view? What is infinite can admit of no increase. He declared, after his resurrection, that all power was *given unto him*; (Matt. xxviii. 18.) but had he been infinite he must have possessed all power before he died, have always possessed it; consequently it must have been a gift which he never needed. It is said that he *was made perfect through suffering*; (Heb. ii. 10.) but had he been infinite he must have been as perfect before he suffered as he was after, as no

imperfection can attach to an infinite being; and the hypothesis which requires him to be infinite, requires him to be such, (consequently to have all power, to be perfect,) at the time when he suffered, not merely afterwards.

If it could be proved that Jesus Christ was an infinite person, the difficulties which remain would be insuperable. In order to his making atonement, it would be necessary that as an infinite person he should suffer and die; for as the hypothesis requires an infinite person to make it, so it requires that he should make it by his death; but an infinite person must be divine, must be truly God, and, consequently, according to the popular notion, God must have died. This, though an idea the most absurd and shocking, has had its advocates; there have been those who have asserted that God died; but after asserting this it is ridiculous for them to boggle at transubstantiation, or any thing, however unreasonable or impossible; for nothing can be more unreasonable, or impossible, than the supposition that God died. To get over this difficulty, it has been said that Christ had two natures, the one finite the other infinite, that he was both God and man; as if two natures, two infinitely different beings, could make *but one person!* However, taking this for granted, which is much easier than finding the least shadow of proof of it, some of the modern advocates for the atonement have said, that the divine or infinite nature neither did nor could suffer, that God could not die, that it was as man only Christ suffered and died. If this be getting rid of the difficulty under one view, it leaves it insuperable under another; for the sufferings and death of a man, a finite being, could not be the infinite satisfaction which is insisted on as necessary. If that which suffered and died made the satisfaction, and that which suffered and died was not infinite, it follows *that no infinite satisfaction is made;* according to the hypothesis, no proper atonement for sin. Either the greatest of all absurdities must continue to be maintained, namely, that God died for sinners, or the notion that Christ by his death made an infinite satisfaction for sins is, at least, virtually relinquished.

If Christ who is supposed to have made the satisfaction or atonement, be an infinite person, truly God, *to whom did he make it?* By all christians it is acknowledged that there is and can be but *one God;* if then Christ be truly

God, he must be that one God; and no other God can be found to receive the atonement. If he was God who made the atonement, and he was God who received it, as there is but one God, it will follow that the same being both made and received it, *i. e.* that he made atonement to himself for the sins of his own creatures. May it not be said, according to the popular notion, that he laid the sins of men upon himself, inflicted on himself the punishment due to them, appeased his own wrath, satisfied his own justice, and paid a price to himself for the blessings of salvation? While it is said that Christ is truly God, as it is acknowledged there is but one God, it follows that he must have both paid and received the price, have made and received the satisfaction, have inflicted and borne the punishment.

To elude these glaring absurdities, it has been urged that, though there is but one God, in this one God there are three co-equal and co-eternal persons, each of whom is truly and properly God; as if three divine intelligent persons could be one God, any more than three human persons can be one man! Economy has been devised, in which the transactions which relate to man's redemption are supposd to be arranged, and each of the divine persons to have taken his particular part, so that each has his different province in carrying those transactions into effect; and that it is the province of the Father to require and receive satisfaction, and of the Son to become man, suffer and die to make that satisfaction. Without stopping to show how foreign to the scriptures these suppositions are, and the absurdity of imagining distinct intelligent agents, who can act in different personal relations, and official capacities towards each other, in one undivided being! suffice it to say, that no difficulty is removed by these vain imaginations; for it is still one and the same God, after all, who is supposed to act in the different provinces, and to conduct all the parts of this imagined economy, both to require, to make, and to receive the satisfaction. Besides if the Father and the Son be perfectly equal, their justice and mercy must be equal; and how is it that the justice of the Father both requires and receives satisfaction, while no provision is made for satisfying the justice of the Son, nor a word is said about his requiring any such satisfaction? How is it that there is no wrath in the Son to appease, that he requires no price for salva-

tion, but mercy and forgiveness flow freely from him; while the wrath of the Father needs appeasing, a price must be paid him for pardon and salvation? It would seem, according to the reputed orthodox scheme, so far from the Father and Son being perfectly equal, the justice of the former is far more stern and rigorous than that of the latter, and the mercy and favour of the latter far more generous and free than the mercy and favour of the former. If the difficulties which have been mentioned, as attending the popular notion of atonement, be not insuperable, then what difficulties are? Surely a doctrine so contrary to the simplicity of the gospel, and which involves so many glaring absurdities, cannot be true, cannot belong to a religion which is suited to babes in knowledge; much less can it be the foundation of the gospel.

7. *A glance at the moral tendency of the popular doctrine of Atonement, and of the christian doctrine of Reconciliation.*

Truth must ever have a tendency to produce good moral effects, in particular religious truth, and most of all evangelical truth as taught by Jesus and his apostles. Error, on the contrary, must be injurious in its tendency, especially such errors as place the character of God in a false light, and corrupt the glorious gospel of his grace.

So far as any doctrines are merely speculative they can have no moral influence; not being practical in their nature and tendency, they cannot be expected to produce any practical good; but so far as the belief of such speculations is supposed to be of essential importance in religion, and such faith to supply the place of virtue, they become injurious, as they tend to produce laxity of morals. Of such a speculative nature are many of the notions entertained of the atonement; and, unhappily, the belief of them is supposed to cancel every crime, and make up for the want of every virtue; such a faith is imagined to have in it the essence of all virtue, and the brightest virtues without it have, by some, been deemed no better than splendid sins. So far as this is the case what good moral effects can be expected? What bad moral effects may not be apprehended? The christian doctrine of reconciliation, so far from being of a speculative nature, has directly to do with the moral condition of mankind, is alto-

gether of a practical tendency, calculated to influence the heart and life, and bring men into a state of oneness with God.

The popular doctrine of atonement is inconsistent with the moral system which God hath established; which system provides for the moral good, improvement and happiness of mankind. According to the moral system which God hath established, by the constitution of the human mind, and the connection he hath fixed between one thing and another in the moral world, Innocence, Righteousness, Sin, and Guilt, are all personal, and cannot be transferred from one man to another; Innocence and Righteousness have effects corresponding to their nature indissolubly connected with them; and Sin and Guilt have also effects suitable to their nature as inseparably connected with them. No one is innocent but such as are free from personal blame, and all such are innocent. None are righteous but those who do right. None are sinners but those who personally transgress; none can feel guilty, but those who are conscious of having sinned; for guilt is the consciousness of having sinned, and all must feel guilty who are conscious of having sinned. The fruits of righteousness can be enjoyed by those only who do right; and the bitter effects of sin can be avoided only by avoiding sin, or ceasing from it. Punishment is suffering connected with guilt, and inflicted as the consequence of sin; it therefore can fall only on the guilty person, the actual sinner. Such is the moral system which God has established; but the popular notion of atonement breaks in upon, and is hostile to it. That notion supposes that sin, guilt and punishment, and righteousness also, are transferrable, and that the effects of sin may be separated from it; that the sin and guilt of actual offenders, were transferred from them to Christ, by being imputed to him, and that their punishment was transferred to him by being inflicted upon him; that his righteousness is transferred to them so far as to be imputed and reckoned to their account. Thus the sinner finds an indemnity before he is purified, and imagines himself made righteous before he does right. How can a doctrine thus at war with the moral order of the universe, and which breaks the connection of causes and effects which God hath established in the moral world, fail to have a bad moral tendency? That tendency is happily counteracted, in numerous instances,

by the good principles of human nature, and those parts of genuine christianity which are still retained; but this alters not the tendency of the doctrine considered in itself. The christian doctrine of reconciliation perfectly harmonizes with the moral system which God has established. It furnishes men with the most efficacious means of being saved from their sins, and of becoming personally righteous; and so of escaping the bitter effects of sin, and of being partakers of the peaceable fruits of righteousness; but it breaks not the connection which God hath established between causes and effects in the moral world. Can then its moral tendency fail to be good?

The doctrine of reconciliation, as stated in this essay, does not endanger the cause of virtue and righteousness; by leading sinners to suppose that another has been righteous in their stead, and that God esteems them righteous on account of the obedience of another. On the contrary, it establishes the necessity, and the essential importance of real personal righteousness, both of heart and life. It is calculated to lead men to enquire how far they are at one with God in their spirit and conduct; to show them that they can be no further happy than they become like him in disposition, and are conformed to his will; and deeply to impress it on their minds, that unless they be personally reconciled to God, by ceasing from all opposition to his will, and by devoting themselves to him, they cannot escape the wrath to come.

The doctrine of atonement, or reconciliation, according to the preceding view of it, contains every thing needful for man, as a guilty perishing creature, and secures every important moral effect. He finds himself placed under a dispensation of free grace and mercy. God hath revealed himself as the loving Father of all, ever disposed to make his creatures happy. Sinners are invited to return to him and receive the free forgiveness of all their sins. They have all the means and strength afforded them by the gospel, that are necessary to make them holy and happy. Every thing possible is done to secure the moral good of the universe, and all in perfect accordance with its established laws. Salvation and eternal life are presented to sinners as free gifts. The way is opened for them to receive all the riches of divine grace, and to attain immortality and glory. What can they desire more? They have cause to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

PLAIN THOUGHTS ON SACRIFICES.

ESSAY VII.

In inquiring into the value and design of the Jewish sacrifices, it is natural to ask, in what estimation were they held by our Lord Jesus Christ, and what did he teach concerning them?

1. As he was a Jew, “made under the law,” and declared that he came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it, (Matt. v. 17.) it is natural to conclude that, if he had considered the ritual service as practised under the law, to be of essential importance, or of indispensable obligation, he would not have neglected to observe it. But did he do this, in any instance, so far as sacrifices were concerned? We have not the least hint in the New Testament that *he ever offered any animal sacrifices, or presented any to the priests to be offered on his account.* May it not hence be concluded, that the offering of sacrifices was not absolutely essential to the obedience required under the law? Perhaps it may be said that it was not necessary for him to offer any sacrifice as he was without sin, and was by his death to become the anti-type of the Jewish sacrifices. This suggests another question.

2. Did Jesus Christ, in any of his addresses to the people, or of his instructions to his disciples, speak of the Jewish sacrifices as vicarious and typical, or intimate that he was the anti-type of those sacrifices? He did nothing of the kind. He even gave no reason for his non-observance of the ritual service so far as related to sacrifices; but left his conduct to speak for itself, and the reasons of it to be gathered from his general teaching. As he taught the great end of the law, and fully explained and enforced the moral parts of it, if the sacrifices were designed to be types of his death, and this design had been all along overlooked and disregarded, it is reasonable to think he would have pointed it out particularly, and have instructed, at least, his own disciples respecting the nature and design of them as being vicarious, and to receive their consummation in his death. But he gave no information on these points, not even to his own disciples; he did not so much as touch on them; but, to the close of his ministry, left his hearers as much in the dark respecting the relation which the Jewish sacrifices are supposed to have

had to him and his death as types to their anti-type, as if he had never taught among them. This is utterly unaccountable on the supposition that the popular notions of sacrifices are correct. Even after his resurrection, when expounding to his disciples in all the scriptures the things concerning himself, (see Luke xxiv. 27, 44, 45.) it is not intimated that he said any thing to them respecting the vicarious nature of sacrifices, or the Jewish sacrifices having a reference to his death, though, had such actually been the case, it is natural to expect he would have done it; nor, had he done it, can it well be thought the Evangelist would have omitted what must have appeared so new and important.

3. Jesus preached the forgiveness of sins, and commissioned his disciples to preach it in his name. He taught that forgiveness is the gift of God, and all his illustrations of God's manner of forgiving show that forgiveness flows from his mercy to sinners, and is his free, unmerited, unpurchased gift. He insisted on repentance, and the forgiveness of others, as essentially necessary, in order to a sinner's obtaining and enjoying forgiveness; but he never mentioned any sacrifice as necessary, either to procure forgiveness for the sinner, or to bring him to the enjoyment of it; but if sacrifices were vicarious, if God required that the victims should die instead of the actual offenders, it must follow, that sacrifices were necessary to obtain pardon for sinners, and bring them to enjoy it. Hence, it appears, that Jesus not only did not teach that sacrifices were vicarious; what he taught was quite incompatible with the notion of their being such. In teaching the way of salvation he said nothing about sacrifices, but made the love and mercy of God the only foundation of it, and a moral change the only necessary condition of enjoying it.

4. As Jesus offered no sacrifices which were appointed by the Jewish law, neither did he direct his disciples to offer any. If it be said, it was not necessary for him to offer them, because he was without sin, this reason will not hold respecting the disciples. If sacrifices were necessary in order to the obtaining forgiveness of sins, until he had sacrificed himself and had become the anti-type of them, why were not the disciples prior to that event directed to offer them? Jesus directed them to pray for and expect forgiveness independently of any sacrifice. If the Jewish sacrifices were vicarious, and, as such, to say the

least, a necessary medium of forgiveness, why were the disciples countenanced by their Master in the disuse of them, when as yet he had not offered himself, and in fact they were shocked at the idea of his laying down his life? If our Lord had ever taught his disciples, that the sacrifice of his life was absolutely necessary for any one to obtain the forgiveness of sins, instead of lamenting, they would have rejoiced in the prospect of that event.

5. That the disciples prepared the passover, and Jesus ate it with them, is no contradiction to the above remarks; for the passover was simply commemorative of what God did for their nation in their preservation and deliverance when in bondage in Egypt. Though the lamb was slain, it was not offered by a priest, nor presented on an altar; and the passover originated in Egypt, of course it was prior to the giving of the law and the ceremonial appointed by that law. It was a Jewish festival, designed to perpetuate the remembrance of God's dealings with that people, and to cherish their gratitude to him; it cannot therefore be construed into an offering for sin.

6. There is but one instance, recorded by the Evangelists, of Jesus giving any direction to any of his hearers respecting their presenting an offering to the priest, and that is in the case of the man whom he cured of the leprosy: (Matt. 8. 4.) him he directed to offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them, His offering this gift had nothing to do with making an expiation for sin, as his having been a leper was no evidence of his guilt, and the offering was presented, not in order to his cure, but in consequence of his being already cured; besides, it was offered for a testimony to others that he was cleansed from his leprosy. In Matt. v. 23, 24 he teaches that those who offer their gifts at the altar, should do it with good will to others, and in a spirit of conciliation and brotherly love. Instead of teaching that sacrifices would set right what was wrong, Jesus taught that men should do right first, in order to their offering their gifts acceptably.

7. Our Lord not only excluded sacrifices from what he declared to be the weightier matters of the law, and in strong terms censured the Scribes and Pharisees for magnifying ceremonial observances into matters of essential importance, and for the reliance they placed upon them, —but he spoke of sacrifices in terms which showed that he

considered them, at most, as of minor importance. Hence his words, *If ye had known what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.* (Matt. 9. 13 & xii. 7.) Also, his approbation of what the Scribe said, that *to love God, and his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.* (Mark xii. 33.) But had the Jewish sacrifices been, as many have supposed, vicarious, and as types of Christ pointed out the only way of salvation, surely they must have ranked among the most weighty matters of the law, and have been of leading and essential importance.

What has been briefly noticed may enable us to judge of the estimation in which our Lord held the Jewish ritual service, and in particular the sacrifices. Had he considered the offering of them as a necessary part of the obedience which God required of those who were under the law, he could not, being made under the law, have consistently allowed himself in the neglect of this part of his obedience as a Jew; nor could he have connived at the neglect of the righteousness of the law, in this respect, in his disciples, who also were under it. Those teachers who believe the Jewish sacrifices to have been vicarious, and typical of the sacrifice of Christ, do not fail to insist on this in their public teaching, and would think themselves faulty if they were always silent on what they think a matter of vast importance; how then do they account for the *total silence* of Jesus on the vicarious and typical nature of those sacrifices? Surely he must have viewed the subject in a different light from what they view it, or he could not have treated it with the total neglect which he did. How will they account for his leaving sacrifices almost totally unnoticed, which they consider to be of such vital consequence; for his never explaining their nature and design, or saying any thing expressive of their value; but, on the contrary, treating them as mere ceremonies, which had no kind of relation to, nor connection with the more perfect dispensation and spiritual worship which he came to introduce, and, consequently, as not calling for any particular notice from him? Had the Jewish sacrifices been what reputed orthodox christians suppose, their relation to Christ and his death, and to the plan of Christian redemption, would have made it natural for him to have particularly noticed and explained them, and to have told the Jews that they were vicarious and typical of

his death, especially as they had never been taught to regard them in that light by Moses or any of the prophets. On the whole, it may well be concluded, that if Christians formed their views of the Jewish sacrifices from the conduct and teaching of Jesus, they would never think of their being either vicarious or typical, or a subject of any essential consequence, especially to the followers of Jesus.

R. W.

ON ORIGINAL SIN AND HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY.

A Conversation.

Richard. Since our last conversation, I have been led to conclude, that, as I have found my views to be erroneous on every subject on which you and I have conversed, that probably this may be the case on other subjects also. Under this impression, I have come to the conclusion to examine into the truth of every sentiment I believe, that I may learn whether my faith is founded on the wisdom of men and the traditions of the fathers, or on the word of God.

Thomas. The conclusion to which you have come, is that of an honest and candid mind;—and one which every one ought to adopt, who has arrived at mature age. The opinions we hold, if we derive them *merely* from tradition, are of little value to us, even though they should be well founded. They serve indeed as a passport among the religious professors of the day; but if we are placed in scenes of temptation and trial, they often forsake us, or we forsake them.

Rich. I am now fully satisfied that it is my duty to follow the advice of Paul,—“*To prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.*” Hitherto I have held fast, with the greatest tenacity, what I have derived from human creeds and confessions of Faith, which I find have deceived me; henceforth I will endeavour to imitate the Bereans of old, who “*searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*” Acts xvii. 11.

Thom. I admire your determination, and shall be happy to render you every assistance in my power. The time was, when like you, I took every thing for granted; but having been led by a singular circumstance to discover my error on a subject of great importance, I sat down, with the determination to examine every thing I professed to believe: and the result was that I found it necessary to relinquish almost every opinion I formerly held, and was led to adopt my present views of religion, which, though they are condemned by the ignorant and the designing, have given me the most heart-felt satisfaction, and filled me with the most cheering hopes of futurity. Before you enter upon this commendable course of inquiry, will you permit me to ask you one question? Are you prepared for the result? If in the course of your investigation, you should discover, that the popular religious opinions of the day are founded only, or principally, on the traditions of men;—do you possess sufficient resolution to avow unpopular doctrines, and thus expose yourself to the censure of the Orthodox?

Rich. I thank you for this caution; but I have counted the cost. I am fully satisfied that it is my duty to seek for truth, as for “hid treasures,” and when I have found it, to hold it fast at all risks. It is not consistent with the character of an honest and upright man, to ask, whether this or that opinion will gain him popular favour, but whether it be *true*.

Thom. I am happy to find that you have thought so closely and maturely on these subjects; and have no doubt, but the result of your inquiries will be productive of the highest satisfaction to your own mind, to whatever evils it may expose you in the world.

Rich. True. And by the grace of God I am determined to enjoy this satisfaction; for, henceforth I will receive nothing as truth but what is plainly supported by scripture and reason.

When I left home this evening, it was not merely with the intention of communicating to you the general reflections which have occupied my mind since our last conversation, but to ask your opinion on a subject which has often engaged my attention, and been a source of much perplexity to me. I refer to the doctrine of *original sin*. You know, this doctrine is considered by most professors to lie at the foundation of all religion; it is therefore of importance that we should be well acquainted with it.

Thom. Before I can state any opinion on this subject, it will be necessary to ask what you mean by *original sin*? If you mean simply whether Adam sinned in eating the forbidden fruit, and whether this was the *first sin*; have no hesitation in answering in the affirmative.

Rich. By *original sin* I mean the doctrine of *hereditary depravity*; or, in the words of our Catechism (*Presbyterian*) "The covenant being made with *Adam*, as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity; all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in that first transgression." — — — — And that "the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called *original sin*, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions." Ques. 22, 25.

Thom. Do not be startled, friend Richard, if I should say, that if this be your definition of *original sin*, I do not believe in it, nor in any part of what you have quoted from your Catechism. I do not believe that a covenant was made with Adam—nor that he was a public person—nor do I believe that upon his standing or falling the future fate of mankind in any respect depended. Nor do I believe that by the first sin of Adam, either his nature, or the nature of any of his descendants was "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to evil, and that continually." Why should I believe these things? The Scriptures have no where taught them. In that Holy Book it is never said that a covenant was made with Adam—or that he was a public head—or that his posterity fell in him—or that their natures became corrupted by his fall—or that they were liable to the pains of Hell for ever, in consequence of his sin. No, no, friend Richard, the pages of that volume were never disgraced by the introduction of such sentiments as these.

Rich. I am almost startled, friend Thomas, with these bold assertions, delivered in so animated a tone, but I am determined to hear you with candour. I must confess I have always been at a loss for a scripture text to support the notion that Adam was our *Covenant Head*. But is

there not good ground to believe that the *sin of Adam was imputed to his descendants*, and that on this account they became liable to punishment.

Thom. I do not believe that the sin of Adam was imputed to his posterity, or that they became liable to punishment either in this world or the next in consequence of his sin, for the following conclusive reason. 1. The Scriptures nowhere teach this doctrine.—2. is impossible. For sin can never be separated from the person committing it. My sin can never become yours nor yours mine, under any circumstance whatever.—Any passages in the Scriptures which appear, at first sight, to countenance such a doctrine, must be understood in a highly figurative sense, or they would clash with the eternal principles of justice and equity;—for surely nothing can be more unjust than to impute the sin of the guilty to the innocent, and then punish the innocent as they were guilty. Hence, 4. we find that such conduct is most positively condemned in Scripture. Let me beseech you to read with attention, Prov. xvii. 15 and Eze. xxviii, 2, 4, 19, 20.

Rich. Though I see much force in your remarks, yet are they not at variance with what is stated by Paul Rom. v. 12—21.

Thom. The passage to which you have referred me may appear, to the superficial reader, to favour the popular opinion. But if you will divest your mind of all prejudice, and hear me with your usual candour, I think I can satisfy you, that the Apostle is not here teaching that all men fell in Adam, and are punished for his sin; but simply, that in consequence of his sin, all men are liable to natural death, which, by the goodness of God, is so far from being a punishment to the posterity of Adam, that it is a blessing, as it is the avenue to eternal life.

Before I offer any remarks on this passage, it will be necessary to consider the import of these words, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” (Gen. ii. 17.) Our orthodox friends very gravely tell us, that by death in this threatening, we are to understand death natural, spiritual and eternal. But these are mere assertions without even the shadow of evidence. It is most manifest, from what is said of this threatened penalty, after it had been incurred, that nothing more is meant than natural death; for God says to Adam, “Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” Gen. iii. 19. This is al-

confirmed by what Paul says, 1 Cor. 15, 21, 22, which is parallel with Rom. v. "As in Adam all die (*naturally*) in Christ shall all be made alive;" that is raised from the dead: for "by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Here we find that the death which came by Adam is opposed to the resurrection by Christ. It cannot then mean *eternal* death, for then they could never be raised again.

If you will now read over Rom. v. 12 &c. you will find that the *life* which is to come by Christ, is as extensive as the *death* by Adam. If then, according to the orthodox interpretation, the death which came by Adam was both *natural*, *spiritual*, and *eternal*; it will irresistably follow, that the life which comes by Christ, is life *natural*, *spiritual*, and *eternal*, and that this will come to all men without a single exception. If we adopt the *orthodox* view of the meaning of death, as threatened to Adam, we must abandon all idea of future punishment, and thus give up great part of the scriptures. But if we understand the word death, to mean simply *natural* death, its first and proper import; then we shall see that this evil will be done away by the resurrection of the dead, and thus all men will be more benefitted by Christ than they have been injured by Adam; and have vastly more cause for gratitude than complaint.

Rich. Your remarks have great force, and I know not how to resist them. Allow me, however, to ask you another question. Do you not believe, that, in consequence of the sin of Adam, all men have lost "*the image of God*" in which our first parents were created?

Thom. By no means. Every son and daughter of Adam is as fully and as really created *in the image of God* now, as Adam was. The reason why any one thinks otherwise, is owing to the improper notion they form of the meaning of the phrase "*made in the image of God*." It is usual to suppose that this means the *moral image of God*, and hence it is inferred that Adam was created *holy*. This is a great mistake. The idea is impossible. When he came out of the hands of his maker, his faculties were in that state of regulation and order, as best fitted him for acquiring holiness or a moral resemblance to his Master. But holiness he could not possess; for holiness or moral excellence is the *result of voluntary obedience to the law of God*. It could have no existence, then, in Adam, unless he had, from principle, obeyed the command of his

Maker. Hence, you will perceive, that he could not *create* holy.

By the *image of God* in which man was created, I understand his resemblance to his maker in the possession *intellectual* faculties—his being endowed with *freedom* of action—and constituted lord of this lower world. But whether this be a correct definition or not, it is certain from the testimony of Scripture that all men are still created in the *image of God*. Let me beg your attention to the following passages. “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood by man shall his blood be shed; for *in the image of God made he man.*” Gen. ix. 6. Unless this expression refers to all men, as well as to Adam, it could be no reason why men should not now shed each others blood.—“*F*a man indeed ought not to cover his head, for as much as *he is (not was) the image and glory of God.*” 1 Cor. xi.—“*T*herewith bless we God, and therewith curse men, who *are* made after the similitude (or image) of God.” Jam. 3. 9.

Rich. You have given me a new view of this subject, and I must acknowledge it appears very reasonable, and certainly deserves and shall have my attentive consideration. There is only one other objection which I shall propose, and I have reserved it to the last, because it always appeared to me more forcible than any other. It is this: “If men do not come into the world with depraved and corrupted natures, how can you account for the universality of sin in the world?” Does not this clearly prove, that it must spring from a corrupted fountain which is common to all the race? If you can satisfactorily answer this objection, you will go far towards convincing me that *hereditary depravity* is not a doctrine of the Scriptures.

Thom. Your last remark, friend Richard, gives me much pleasure, because I now feel confident that I shall be able to deliver your mind from the influence of the gloomy and pernicious doctrine under which you have laboured for some time. Nothing is more easy than to answer this last objection of yours. Nay, you shall answer it yourself if you will candidly reply to one or two questions. If the general prevalence of sin in the world, is proof of a *previously* corrupted and depraved nature in men; will not the *one sin* which Adam committed, be equally valid proof that his nature was corrupted and depraved before he sinned, and that this depraved nature

led to his sin?—But would not such a supposition be contrary both to Scripture and to fact?

Rich. Certainly; and I now see clearly, that if we trace the general prevalence of sin, to the existence of a *depraved* nature, then it will follow, that Adam's nature, as he came out of the hands of God was also depraved, which would be contrary to the Scriptures.

I am thankful, friend Thomas, that we have had this conversation. I have obtained much new light, and my mind is already delivered from those gloomy thoughts which have generally oppressed me when this subject was before me. If I find, upon examination, that your remarks are solid and just, I shall at once embrace them; and I already feel, that the change which this will effect in my religious views, will greatly increase my happiness, by enabling me to contemplate the divine character and conduct under an aspect which cannot fail to fill my mind with love and gratitude.

Thom. I have no doubt but such will be the result of renouncing so gloomy and pernicious a doctrine as that of *hereditary* and *total depravity*. But before we separate, I would beg leave to give you a summary of *our* objections to this doctrine. During our present conversation I have been in a great measure employed in answering *your* objections. It may serve to assist your future inquiries, if I present to you, in a condensed form our arguments against it.

"We are astonished that such a doctrine, even in ages of darkness, should have been regarded as a *scripture doctrine*; and we are still more astonished that, at the present day, when new light is shed upon the holy scriptures, and men are beginning to reason and think for themselves on the subject of religion, it should, even in a modified sense, be believed by so many christians; and regarded by them, too, as a peculiarly fundamental truth of revelation. Is it possible that God has created men thus, and has revealed to them their moral helplessness and their awful doom! Enlightened as we are by reason, and having in our hands the volume of revelation, and seeing the constant manifestations of God's goodness written on his works, how can we regard sentiments like those you have quoted from the Assembly's Catechism, as coming from the author of all good? Are these the sentiments which the merciful Father of men has revealed from heaven, to enlighten, to console, and to bless his children? Was it to

proclaim opinions like these, that he raised up holy prophets and apostles, and sent the son of his love? Are such sentiments the fruits of that heavenly message, which was announced to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, a message ‘of great joy,’ ‘which should be to all people?’ And do they harmonize with those angelic strains which announced the advent of the Saviour,—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men?” Impossible!

1. We object to the doctrine of hereditary and total depravity, because it *contradicts our observation**. There is not one man in ten thousand who is *totally depraved*.

2. Because it teaches what *cannot be accounted for upon any known principles or laws of our nature*, and seems altogether *miraculous*. For this doctrine implies such a change in the constitution of man, and such a transmission of character, as is quite out of the common course of things. And would the benevolent Deity work a miracle in order to make his children more vicious than they would otherwise have been?

3. We object to this doctrine because it *dishonours our religion*, and is not unfrequently *the cause of infidelity*.

4. We object to the doctrine of *hereditary depravity* because it is *inconsistent with the perfections, and derogatory to the character of the Deity*.

5. Because it has a *bad moral tendency*. If men sincerely believe that they are naturally so depraved as to be totally unable to do a good action—or by any possible exertion to obtain the favour of God, will they make the attempt? Certainly not. Why should they? It would be labour spent in vain. The doctrine of hereditary and total depravity, is the principal cause of all the vices which prevail in christian countries. It cannot then be a doctrine of revelation. For every thing taught in that holy book has a tendency to make us wiser and better.

6. We object to the doctrine of hereditary and total depravity, because it is the foundation of a doctrine, which of all others, is most abhorrent to our feelings;—a doctrine which must often have filled the bosom of wounded affection, and sent anguish and despair into the parental heart, that has been bereaved of its dearest treasure: I mean the *doctrine of infant damnation*.

7. Finally, we object to the doctrine under consideration, because it is *opposed to the general language of the scriptures*. Every command to obedience—every exhortation to repentance, every promise to the returning penitent, is an argument against the doctrine of *hereditary depravity*, and an irresistible proof that all men are fully able to do the will of God.

P.

* See Brigg's sermon on Hereditary and Total Depravity.